

Popular Culture and Colonial Modernity: The Transformation of *Yadam* Folk Tales in Korea from the mid-1920s to 1945

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This thesis analyses the continuity and simultaneity of colonial modernity in Korean popular culture from the mid 1920s to 1945 by examining *Yadam*, a traditional narrative and performance genre. This research challenges the existing interpretation that the popular culture of what was seen as “splendid modernity” in the 1920s-1930s ended with the Sino-Japanese War starting in 1937. By excluding diverse aspects of wartime popular culture, the existing perspective more dramatically emphasizes an antagonistic relationship between Japanese “exploitation” and the “resistance of colonial people”.

This research analyzed *Yadam* texts and articles from magazines (2 types of specialized *Yadam* magazines and other popular magazines) and newspapers during the colonial period. These sources were examined using text analysis and discourse analysis. It discovered that, rather than being used as a means of wartime Japanese propaganda, *Yadam* continued its popularity during the war, and the war itself was the driving force for its popularity. In other words, taking advantage of the Japanese total war system, *Yadam* had a wider range of circulation. This trend is not unique to Colonial Korea but is found simultaneously in Japan and its other colonies under the total war system. This, however, does not deny the existence of Japanese wartime propaganda in the 1940s. Japanese ruling power intended to use *Yadam* for war mobilization, but there were different expectations among Japan (the propaganda sender), *Yadam* producers and consumers. This conflict, related to the production and consumption of *Yadam*, created an unintended opportunity for Korean popular culture during the wartime.